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## DELTA EMERGENCY PLAN SIGNED INTO LAW — CALIFORNIA’S “KATRINA” ONLY A MATTER OF TIME

SACRAMENTO – Governor Schwarzenegger today signed legislation to address the needs of the Sacramento San Joaquin Delta in the event of an emergency. Senate Bill 27, authored by State Senator Joe Simitian (D-Palo Alto), requires the Office of Emergency Services to convene a Multi-Hazard Coordination Task Force that is responsible for emergency response planning in the Delta. Simitian said his goal with SB 27 is, “to make sure that at the moment of emergency, we know who’s in charge and what’s to be done; and that folks are properly trained for a successful response.”

“A Katrina-like catastrophe is only one tragic event away, and the responses by various state and local agencies must be coordinated to lessen the impacts, save lives and property, and protect vital statewide infrastructure,” Simitian said. “Just as New Orleans was at the heart of Louisiana, the Delta is the heart of California’s economy and environmental health. This is a regional issue with statewide implications.”

Simitian noted that, “In the aftermath of Katrina, all we heard were charges and counter charges from local, state and federal officials — each blaming the others. If and when the Delta collapses, California can’t afford that kind of buck-passing, blame-laying response.”

Specifically, before January 1, 2011, the Task Force will accomplish three critical requirements: Present recommendations relating to the creation of a unified command system; Coordinate the development of a draft emergency preparedness and response strategy for the Delta region; and, Develop and conduct an all-hazard emergency response exercise in the Delta designed to test regional protocols already in place.

SB 27 is the result of a series of stakeholder meetings between the Delta Protection Commission, State Department of Water Resources, Office of Emergency Services, state water contractors, the five Delta counties, and the flood control districts. The measure ensures that agencies at the state level communicate with local entities to create a multi-hazard planning process, while drawing on the various processes underway.

“A combination of factors – earthquakes, sea rise caused by climate change, flooding, deteriorating unstable levees – make the Delta a disaster waiting to happen,” Simitian added. “The scientists tell us there’s a two out of three chance the Delta will collapse in the next 50 years. We can’t afford to overlook emergency preparedness and jeopardize the 23 million people, 20 billion dollar agricultural economy and communities from Contra Costa County to the Mexican border that depend on the Delta.”

“We congratulate Senator Simitian and the Governor for taking action to protect those in harm's way of a potential catastrophe in the Delta. Long-term solutions for the Delta are the subject of ongoing debate but there is no debate about the need for comprehensive emergency planning to save lives and protect infrastructure,” said Laura Harnish, Regional Director of Environmental Defense.

To learn more about SB 27, please visit [www.senatorsimitian.com](http://www.senatorsimitian.com)

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